Le Cochon Sauvage

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Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom/Margot Verger, Mischa Lecter/Original Character(s), Beverly Katz & Jimmy Price & Brian Zeller
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom, Margot Verger, Beverly Katz, Mischa Lecter, Original Characters, will graham's ptsd nightmares, at least a dozen stray dogs
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Historical, Supernatural Elements, Mythical Beings & Creatures, the author attempts historical accuracy but also there's werewolves and other creatures, Loup-garou | Rougarou, blasphemy & sacrilege, catholic guilt and the resulting internal conflicts but make it sexy, Trans Will Graham, alana is also trans, Everyone is Queer, Trans Character, Mischa Lecter Lives, Implied/Referenced Abortion, alana performs abortions but it doesn't go into detail, the complicated relationship between, the imperialist expansion of christianity and the old gods that they couldn't completely destroy, will is autistic & autistic writer is fully projecting
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Le Cochon Sauvage

by goodgollymxmolly

Summary

takes place somewhere between 1905-1910 in paris at a cabaret named le cochon sauvage, so kinda like a moulin rouge au except more just the time period and setting than the plot. the plot of this story is: there's a werewolf (french: loup-garou) killing people in paris and things keep getting weirder.
this takes place before hormone therapy/surgeries were really accessible, so will doesn't have his scruff. will has louisiana creole ancestry and is multiracial. I picture him as like ella enchanted-era smooth-faced hugh dancy with the skin tone of josephine baker (famous cabaret dancer and actress - look her up, she's great). also, alana and hannibal are surgeons because I didn't want to attempt early 20th century psychiatry

Notes

paris is a very multicultural city so people are going to be speaking in several different languages. I wasn't sure how to go about that since I'm only fluent in english and have forgotten most everything from my one year of high school french. please let me know if context clues in the surrounding text are enough to understand the gist of what they're saying, or if you think I should add translations in the end notes or something. 1st chapter edited 3/3/2021

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Night had settled over the bayou, the light of a full moon illuminating in the murky water: the reflection of a cabin, seated on a short overhang above the water - it's suddenly distorted by a series of strong ripples. Inside the cabin, a man startles at the sound of a loud splash. Now alert and awake, he flips up his blanket and pulls on his boots, considers a moment before grabbing his shotgun. He cocks it and heads out the door to search for the source of the noise.

He walks along the edge of visibility from his lighted house, eyes squinted and searching in the low light. All he hears is crickets for a long moment - then, he sees it: something dark and solid and unmoving, floating toward the shore. Some kind of animal, perhaps?

By the time the man gets to the water's edge, it has floated close enough to the bank that he can reach and haul it out of the water. The figure is a young woman, caked in mud. He clears away some muck from her pale face and lifts her head closer to his own; she is still breathing, weak and shallow. He drags her limp body further up the bank, and sets her down to collect a light from inside his cabin.

He returns shortly and sees that she has moved, curled up and head bowed in toward her knees. He watches her tremble, and he kneels by her, setting aside his candle and chamberstick. He reaches out to embrace her and stop her shivering. Her hands are clutching at her muddy mess of hair, obscuring her face. His hand moves to uncover her, tentative, and when his hand rests on hers she tenses and freezes. "It's all right, hon. I'm just tryin' to help." He cups one of her hands and she grips it weakly in response.

He pulls his hand away gently and uses it to brush her hair back, tries to get a better look at her face. But where her face should be, all he sees is more hair, shorter and thicker than the strands he had felt a moment ago. He raises his chamberstick, and the mass of hair parts to reveal a sickly yellow orb turning toward the light. The man watches the flame reflect in the pupil of the creature's eye; then with a flash of dark fur and yellow fangs, the creature lashes out.

His vision goes black as he is knocked back by the sharp claws that tear across his face. Blind and panicked, he feels his stomach torn into, the impact ripping a gurgling scream from the dying man's lungs.

Will Graham's eyes fly open, piercing blue and wild, and flicker in panic to take in his surroundings. In the early morning light, he checks his sparsely-furnished apartment - desk, chair, trunk, and the bed which he lays in - everything is where it should be. He forces himself to inhale deeply, ears filled with the fading sound of ripping flesh, then exhales a slow, shuddering breath as he reorients himself. There is the familiar sensation of his brunet curls plastered to his forehead with sweat, and his nightshirt clings wetly to his chest.

He unclenches his fingers from his blanket, with effort, pulls his damp nightshirt over his head, and tosses it to a small pile of crumpled clothes in the corner. He lifts a hand to brush against the thin silver chain around his neck; his fingertips follow it down to a simple cross that rests on his breastbone.

Satisfied that he is no longer dreaming, he sighs and rises from his bed to start the day. He pulls a relatively fresh shirt and trousers from his trunk. Once dressed, he pats his jacket pocket to feel for his rosary with beads made of Job's Tears, then gathers the soiled-clothing pile into a cloth bag to take out to the lavoir.

Will knocks on the door of the apartment a floor below his own, which is being rented by his co-worker Beverly Katz, a fellow American in Paris. He hears someone stumble with a softly-muttered curse. The door cracks open to show a disgruntled young woman of Korean descent, who looks him over before she greets him with: "You look like hell." Will smiles despite himself at her attitude, feels it stretch the thin skin of the bags under his tired eyes. "Bonjour, Bev. Laundry day."

She simply opens the door further to invite him in. He remains in the doorway, observing a mess of clothing on the floor, over a chair, on the window sill. Two voices grumble complaints from a lumpy huddle on the bed as Bev pulls a long skirt from underneath the blankets.

"I'll have espresso for you when you're ready," Will says, then heads down the stairs after Bev waives him off.

A quarter of an hour later, Will is making his way down the Rue de Abbesses to the public washhouse a few blocks away. Bev walks beside him, her mood only marginally better after downing her coffee in one breath.

"I just don't understand why we have to go so *early*," she complains.

"I was awake," Will shrugs. A couple of stray dogs trot up to them and he adjusts his laundry bag in one arm so he can use the other to scratch their heads as they walk.

"You're lucky I was as well," Bev grumbles, "I had practically no sleep."

The dogs have realized that Will has no food on his person, so they chase each other into an alleyway as Will responds. "Well, I appreciate your company, sleep-deprived or otherwise. Want help evicting the boys when we return?"

"I told them they had better be gone by then," Bev mutters darkly, "or else."

Will grins at that.

When they reach the lavoir, they are greeted by a gaggle of laundresses who work throughout the neighborhood. Bev chats with Madame Martin, a middle-aged woman who had worked in

England for some years and is happy to engage the Americans in conversation, since their French is less than fluent. Will washes in silence, content to simply listen to the conversation around him.

The better part of an hour later, Will is done with washing and turning to ask Bev if she needs help with her last sheet when he suddenly pauses, and looks up to see that a young woman is approaching, face half-covered in bruises. He hears a chorus of small gasps before a few women flock to her, setting her laundry aside as they look her over. She is speaking quietly in French, words too soft and quick for him to understand.

“Do you know what happened?” Bev inquires of Madame Martin, who was frowning deeply, unconcerned about eavesdropping so obviously.

“It was that awful man she works for, Monsieur Brodeur, on Rue Gabrielle. I know of several mademoiselles who have been mistreated by him.” She spits on the ground, “C’est un connard méprisable.”

“Can’t we do anything?” Bev’s voice is steady, but Will senses the anger simmering beneath her deceptively calm demeanor.

“I will pray for her safety,” Madame Martin looks up at the sky, where a nearly-full moon hangs, clearly visible even as the morning sun shines, “and for his soul to turn back to God.”

“Perhaps le loup-garou will get him,” another young woman speaks up, and a round of hisses and shushing sounds respond. A few women step back from her and perform the sign of the cross.

Madame Martin considers the speaker. “The English have a saying: que si vous parlez du diable, il apparaîtra.”

“Speak of the devil,” Bev confirms.

Will has been watching the bruised girl take in the conversation. She looked conflicted when the loup-garou was mentioned - fear of the beast, hope for relief from her abuser, and guilt over wishing for harm.

Will speaks as he gathers his things, breaking the tense silence which had followed that last comment. “Bev, I’m finished. I’ll see you in Pigalle later?”

“No, give me one more minute and I’ll join you.”

The laundresses return to washing and chatting, and soon the Americans are wishing Madame Martin a good day and heading back to their apartments to hang laundry for drying.

That afternoon, Will stands on the Boulevard de Clichy in Quartier Pigalle, staring up at Le Cochon Sauvage, a cabaret house that is nearing the completion of months-long renovations. Will works as a handyman there - they call him bricoleur.

He is technically supervising construction, but right now just watches as Bev directs several workers who are lining up letter signs, which together spell out the name of the establishment. He has shed his jacket and added a newsboy hat, whose bill is not long enough on its own to block out the bright sunlight, so he also holds a few sheets of sketch paper up against his forehead.

“Will,” a voice calls him from the shadow of the front entrance. His eyes adjust to see Margot Bloom, a petite woman whose blonde hair is up in an uncharacteristically frantic ponytail, waving him over. He rushes into the building, sensing something is off.

Margot leads him into a back room where her spouse, Alana, is seated, with blood on her face from a cut at her left temple and favoring her left shoulder.

Will hurries to her side, taking in the blood crusted into the dark brown waves of her hair. “What the fuck happened?”

Alana chuckles weakly. “You should see the other guy.”

Margot appears at her shoulder and picks up a rag, dipping it in a bowl of pinkish water and dabbing it to clean Alana’s bloody head.

Will reaches out but hesitates, unsure of what to do. “What do you need?”

“Alana was attacked,” Margot cuts in, “And she refuses to say who did it,”. Her voice is tense, which makes her French accent more pronounced than usual. “There is a doctor visiting Paris who attended Johns Hopkins with Alana. We need you to fetch him so he can check over her. Take that note.”

Will picks up the sealed note, which is addressed in Margot’s spiky cursive handwriting to: *Docteur Hannibal Lecter. Urgente.*

“I think he said something”, Alana pipes up, “about dinner with some acquaintances at, um... Le Petit Mouton?” Her tone is too light for the gravity of her situation, considering how she is speaking so haltingly. Margot frowns at her.

Will pockets the note, Margot’s anxiety mixing with his and making him terse. “Anything else?”

Alana gestures vaguely toward Will, in reference to the note. “Included, there, is a list of supplies, we may need. Can you get them from the apothecary on Rue, ah, Rue Véron, after you find Hannibal? I have an account there with, um.. Dr. Iglesias.”

He nods, and Alana and Margot watch him exit.

It isn’t until Will arrives at the crowded restaurant that he realizes he has no idea what Dr. Lecter looks like. He walks up to the empty host-stand and looks around nervously. This place is fancy and he is underdressed in his work clothes, especially since he had forgotten his jacket, which would have hidden his fraying suspenders and the colorful variety of stains

on his shirt. He remembers belatedly to remove his hat - he is not entirely without manners today, at least.

Will searches for the host, painfully aware that he is out of place here, and his eyes are drawn to a table in the back corner, where several well-dressed men are chatting together. Will cannot hear their conversation. He focuses his attention more fully on the table, taking in details and trying to narrow in on the object that pricked his intuition.

A clean-shaven gentleman is speaking, the others leaning toward him in anticipation. The man's ash brown hair is combed back severely and his dinner jacket is charcoal grey, offset by a rich crimson ascot. Will watches as the man finishes, presumingly laying a punch line, because the men around him laugh gaily.

As if noticing Will's attention, the man's gaze slides past the amused faces and catches Will's own. The eye contact is intense but brief, as the maître d' steps then into Will's line of sight and greets him.

Will blinks, startled, before processing his greeting. "J'ai une note," Will stammers, "pour le Docteur Lecter." Will hands him the note for inspection, and cringes internally as his words play back in his head, an octave too high. "C'est urgent," Will says, voice pitched lower, and maybe too sharply, because he gets a look before the maître d' walks out to the dining room floor.

With anxiety wriggling in his stomach, Will watches him walk to the table he had been observing before, and present the note to the intense man who had caught Will staring. Shit, of course. He wishes he could hide his face beneath his hat. He clutches it to his chest instead, fingering nervously at the seams.

Dr. Lecter scans the note quickly, then thanks the maître d' and apologizes to his companions before heading toward Will. "Bonsoir," the doctor greets him, extending a hand. His charcoal suit is accented with thin white pinstripes. "You work for Docteur Bloom?" he asks in French.

"Oui." Will regards his extended hand but is unable to make himself reach out and take it. Luckily, a host then appears to hand Dr. Lecter his overcoat; he regards Will with subtlety as he pulls it on. Will thinks the doctor must be confused by his sudden shy demeanour, after having been staring at him so openly earlier. Will avoids his eyes and focuses on his coat sleeve, the color of fresh cream.

"You weren't dining?" Will suddenly realizes that the doctor hadn't had a plate in front of him at the table.

"No." A pause as Hannibal is handed his tophat. "You prefer English, then, Mr. Graham?" Will nods. His gaze raises to the ascot, embossed with a paisley pattern only a few shades darker than the crimson base.

"Mrs. Bloom has included a short list of medical supplies that may be needed." He hands Will the list that had been folded in the note. "I am not familiar with the shops in this area. You will fetch them? Please bring them to us, straightaway."

Will nods again, snatches the proffered note from the doctor's hand and quickly heads out to complete his task. He pauses at the doorway, body half turned back. "Know where you're going?" Dr. Lecter confirms, and Will sets out.

On Rue Véron, Will searches the storefronts until he spies the name Iglesias in the window of a place called Générosité des Anges. "Pardon?" he calls out as he enters. He scans the stocked shelves, grabs some of the items needed as he listens to the click of approaching footsteps on wooden floorboards.

Will sets several boxes on the counter as the clerk takes her spot behind it. "These, as well," he requests in French as he slides the list toward her, keeping his eyes on the boxes. "Docteur Bloom's account, s'il vous plaît." Will watches a hand pick up the note, skin brownish-red like the color of clay. She walks away to grab some things from the back and he looks up to take in his surroundings.

The woman's black hair is smoothed back into a braided bun. Will sees that beyond the counter are shelves full of jars, each labelled with an illustration and two names: one language that looks similar to French and one other which is entirely unfamiliar to him. He watches the clerk mix dried herbs with a mortar and pestle. He then notices the mural of Our Lady of Guadalupe painted in bright pigment on a wall. The rich colors draw him in and he realizes that Spanish must be the first language on the jars.

The sound of a bag being set softly on the counter pulls him sharply back into the moment. He was so absorbed by Guadalupe that he hadn't heard her approach. "Is that all?" the clerk asks. Her voice is low and calming, and her dark brown eyes regard him politely.

Will checks the list. "Si. Ah, oui. Thank you. Bonsoir." He hastily grabs the bag and hurries out before he can find out if it is possible to blush in three different languages.

Back at Le Cochon Sauvage, Will and Margot wait impatiently in the hallway outside the room where Dr. Lecter is tending to Alana. Margot leans against the wall, smoking a long cigarette with a pout - after Will arrived, Alana had asked them to wait outside. Will knows she wants him to keep Margot company, but instead of comforting each other, they are amplifying each other's stress. Margot is nearing the end of her pack of cigarettes; Will's hands are shoved into his pockets and he recites the rosary prayers silently in his head, thumbs at the beads, and paces.

After a few more laps, Margot sighs and hooks her arm on Will's, pulls him out of his anxious pattern. "William, please." Margot rests her free hand on the sleeve of his jacket to keep him in place. "Alana holds le docteur in high regard."

Will cocks his head at her. "But?" he prompts. Margot pouts again, looking away.

"You are...jealous?" Will asks in surprise, though honestly he is relieved to latch onto any emotion other than anxiety, like a rope tossed to help him out of an endless pit of dread.

The pout turns into a grimace. “I do not like this feeling helpless. I want to be able to do everything to protect her. But, I am not a docteur.”

“No.” Will straightens and sweeps his curls back for a moment of contemplation. “But that’s not all, is it?”

Margot takes a long drag before answering, smoking curling from her lips. “They had an affair. While at medical school.” Margot raises her hand at Will opening his mouth to speak. “I know she loves me and I do not expect anything to happen now. I just feel...inadéquate.”

Will lets that hang in the air for a moment, before he leans in and asks conspiratorially, “Should I help you make her jealous?”

Margot side-eyes him, unimpressed, before she cracks a smile and swats his arm. “Mon cherie, you are a menace.”

Will grins at her. “That is why you keep me around, I think.”

They are interrupted by the door opening. The doctor’s expression is amiable, his eyes quickly take in their familiar posture and secret smiles. “No serious injury,” Dr. Lecter assures them, and he holds the door as an open invitation. Margot drops Will’s arm and strides into the room, with a singular focus and quick “merci”, heading immediately for Alana.

Will follows close behind, pauses just inside the doorway as he watches Margot fuss over her spouse. He lets out a breath of relief and decides to give them a moment to themselves. Will turns back to Dr. Lecter; indicates for him to follow as he steps back into the hallway.

Will looks the doctor over as he organizes his thoughts, and his look is returned with curiosity. Overcoat, suit jacket, and ascot had been removed, leaving him in a white shirt tucked into dark trousers, sleeves rolled up to his elbows and the top two buttons undone. His hair is no longer perfectly slicked back; some of it hangs loosely on his forehead. Overall, he seems much less intimidating to Will than he had earlier that afternoon.

“Dr. Lecter,” Will begins, eyes focusing somewhere around his shoulder, “I want to thank you for your help this evening.” His gaze drifts to the exposed dip of his collarbone, then studiously away. “And I want to apologize for my, er, *abrupt* behavior earlier, at the restaurant. It can be difficult, sometimes, for me..”

The doctor waits politely for him to finish, and when it becomes apparent that Will isn’t going to continue, he responds. “You were concerned for your friend, and understandably distracted. I cannot hold that against you, especially since our interaction was rushed in the spirit of helping Alana.”

Will considers that, meets his gaze for half a second. Will pulls a hand out of his pocket, offers it with a somewhat self-conscious smile. “Will Graham. It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Dr. Lecter.”

“The pleasure is mine, Monsieur” the doctor responds as he takes the hand in a firm grip. “And please, call me Hannibal.”

Will nods with a tired smile, suddenly exhausted from all the day’s excitement. Alana calls for them and they separate; Will holds the door for Hannibal and follows him into the room.

The sun is setting outside, color bursting through the room’s east-facing windows. Will watches as the backlit shadow of Hannibal makes its way over to where Alana and Margot sit together. Hannibal’s figure, outlined in reds and oranges, presses a kiss to Alana’s cheek and places a peck on Margot’s hand, as the ladies thank him again.

After Hannibal has slipped back into his jacket and overcoat, he addresses them all with a “Bonsoir, mes amies.” He nods finally to Will and walks out, cream-colored coat bathed in the crimson of the setting sun.

“I feel better already,” Alana insists to Margot, gentling. Will turns away from the empty doorway and walks toward Alana. “Really, it’s nothing serious,” this time to Will. He hugs her, carefully. She attempts to reassure him with a soft pat on the back. “Hannibal said I need simply to avoid exertion for a few days, perhaps a week, until my shoulder is fully healed, and I agree with his prognosis.”

Will pulls away, satisfied for now. “I should check in with Bev,” he realizes after a yawn.

“She did an admirable job in your absence, Will,” Margot explains, amused. “I can confirm that all of the letters signs are attached to the building, even in the correct order. I think this is a better idea: you should go straight to bed.”

“I agree,” Alana adds, “doctor’s orders.”

Will just nods; then, “Will it be safe for you to walk home?”

“Do not worry yourself, cherie,” Margot dismisses him gently, “I have arranged for an escort.” At that moment, there is a knock on the open door and a muscular young man steps in.

“Ready to go?” he asks in French, then notices Will. “Oh, Monsieur Graham. This arrived for you.” The young man, whose name Will either does not know or is too tired to remember, hands him a small parcel. Will reads the note attached:

Monsieur,

Thank you for visiting Générosité des Anges this afternoon, and for delivering Dr. Bloom’s order directly. If you will pardon my saying so, you seemed in need of a good night’s rest. Please find a packet of herbs enclosed - steep the contents in hot water and drink one hour before bed. This should provide you with a restful sleep.

Duerme bien,

Señora Iglesias

“Were you expecting a delivery today?” Will asks Alana as he hands over the note.

She scans it quickly. “Yes. Well, I had an order set to be delivered tomorrow. It was in the bag you brought from the apothecary.” She looks at Will, who holds the parcel in his hand. “You do look especially exhausted. Madame Iglesias is a master of herbal medicine - I am confident that she has provided you with something useful. Very kind of her.” That last sentence is softer, like Alana is thinking aloud.

Will hums and takes the note back from Margot, who has finished reading it as well. “My preferred nightcap involves whiskey, but I suppose I will give this a chance.” He stands there, bleary-eyed, staring at the note without reading it.

“All right, Will,” Margot plucks the note from his hand and places it in his pocket along with the parcel. “Time to go home, before you fall asleep on your feet.”

Margot ushers everyone out of the room and locks up behind herself. They stay with Will and walk him back to his apartment building. They might have even taken him up the stairs, if Bev hadn’t been on the first floor chatting with the landlord, a Madame Legrand, seen them through the window, and come out to greet them.

Somehow they make it up the several flights of stairs to Will’s attic apartment. Tomorrow, Bev will insist that she had done all the work. Will will vaguely remember her wrestling him out of his jacket and boots before putting the rest of him in bed, as well as the feel of a cool breeze that drifts in from the window, which Bev opens halfway to let in fresh air.

Tomorrow, like most mornings, they will exchange easy banter as they walk together en route to work. Then, like no morning before, they will realize that the streets are unusually empty and quiet. They will hear hushed voices carried through sidestreets. They will follow the sounds and find dozens of people gathered, whispering to each other and straining to get a look over the crowd beyond. Distantly, they will see that the crowd is centered around a church tower. They will not see that the tower is connected to a small chapel, nor will they see the blood pooled beneath the chapel’s doors. They will not see the corpse in the chapel, just inside those doors, its belly gored and limbs scattered, ripped from its torso. And no one will see the corpse’s missing head; though the day after tomorrow, many would say that the loup-garou - the wolf-man - had swallowed it whole.

Chapter End Notes

I may have gotten a bit enamored with myself in writing that last paragraph. please let me know if it works well to build suspense or if it's too much.
for those concerned, know that alana and margot are thoroughly committed to each other. I decided to have alana and hannibal have an affair previously because it is endlessly amusing for me to imagine hannibal scandalizing and causing mischief for egg alana, who I imagine was much more reserved while in school. (egg = a trans person before they realize they are trans.) also this is a cabaret au so like everybody has fucked

at some point
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Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> hannibal and mischa time! I feel like a lot of writers make mischa very tame in comparison to her brother, but in my story she is deeply unsettling and I'm having a lot of fun with that

Chapter Notes

> I wrote this trying to imagine how hannibal would be different if his family, especially mischa, didn't die - I think he would still be a murderer and manipulative as hell, but maybe less shut off emotionally from the people around him. anyway, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal stands in the near-empty pews of a small chapel on the outskirts of Baltimore. The night is dark and the only light comes from the flickering of several small prayer candles. He is attending to a man sitting in a pew, freshly deceased and holding a bible open in his lap.

While the man was still conscious, Hannibal had removed his tongue and placed a clamp over the stub to prevent him from bleeding out too quickly. He wanted the man to remain aware as he removed his organs.

The tongue was first because it had done the most offending, then the liver, pancreas, and both kidneys. Removing the liver and pancreas was more symbolic than for any practical use - they were damaged by the man's long history of alcohol abuse, and therefore Hannibal would not be serving them at his dinner party later that week.

The kidneys, however, he stores in the insulated basket that he had brought with him, then makes the final adjustments to this evening's tableau. He leaves the man's tongue resting on a page in the bible, marking his place at Proverbs chapter 10.

First thing in the morning - that is, after cooking up a savory sausage omelette - he is delivered a telegram from his sister, Mischa; a simple message with a few bible verses and the telephone number. Hannibal recalls the first verse by memory as he reads it, and references a bible for the other two:

Proverbs 10:31 - The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off.

Psalm 139:2 - You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar.

Proverbs 2:11 - Discretion will watch over you, Understanding will guard you.

Well, Mischa certainly knows how to get his attention. He decides to call after finishing his breakfast.

The sound of a motorcar engine approaching and cutting off brings Hannibal back into the present moment. When he had telephoned, Mischa had asked that he visit her in Paris, and here he is, several months later, preparing dinner at a spacious townhouse on Rue de Rivoli in Le Marais district.

The apartment is owned by his uncle Robert, who normally resides here with his wife Murasaki and her handmaiden Chiyoh. Currently, however, they are in Japan visiting with Murasaki's ill father. Mischa is maintaining the apartment in their absence.

While Hannibal had been looking forward to seeing his family, it may be better that it's only him and Mischa for now. He had grown accustomed to living by himself in Baltimore and relished the freedom afforded by that solitude. Only recently has that solitude been tinged with loneliness, which is why he accepted Mischa's invitation after little deliberation.

Though it has been twelve years since Hannibal was last in Paris, he feels familiar with the apartment that he and his sister had visited often as children. There are enough changes to be interesting, yet enough remains the same to be comforting. He is curious what changes and comforts Mischa will provide him.

Hannibal pours himself a glass of wine as he listens to his sister enter the apartment. She calls out to him and he responds in Lithuanian, "I'll meet you in the dining room shortly."

Mischa ignores this and comes straight to the kitchen. Hannibal sets down the wine so she can wrap him in a big hug. She holds him tightly for a long moment, then steps back to look at him eagerly, hands still resting on his arms.

Hannibal left for America when he was 18, so he has not seen much of his sister as an adult. Mischa looks very similar to Hannibal, a six-year difference between them. She has his strong jaw but her bottom lip is fuller. They have similarly deep-set eyes, but Hannibal's irises are more golden-brown whereas hers are more maroon. They both had fair hair as children; now her hair matches their mother's honey-blonde while his is closer to their father's brunet.

Their most significant differences in appearance are Hannibal's left hand, which has six digits and two identical middle fingers, and Mischa's left eye, which is made of glass. She also has a faded scar that runs from just above her left eyebrow, down across her eye, ending with a dip at the top of a high cheekbone.

She is distracted by the smell of fresh bread on the counter. “Is this from the pâtisserie around the corner?” Mischa asks as she reaches toward the baguette. “They have the best macarons-”

“Yes,” Hannibal responds, amused, as he catches her hand and directs her toward a cabinet instead. “Please go set the table and you can tell me more about it while we dine.”

She sighs and gathers dishes to take to the dining room. When she returns for the utensils, she pointedly steals his wine glass to take out with her.

Soon the table is set, Mischa is seated, and Hannibal is serving. “Something simple tonight. I’m afraid I have not had time to visit the butcher since I arrived.” Hannibal places a bowl of beetroot soup in front of her and places another at his seat across from her.

At this point in the meal, he would usually describe the dish - tonight’s is burokėlių sriuba - for his guests as he laid out the food, but this is an old Lithuanian recipe and Mischa is as familiar with it as he is. Hannibal feels a pleasant warmth in his chest as he pours himself another glass of wine.

Mischa waits until he has taken his seat to start in on the soup. At her first spoonful she makes a surprised sound, then narrows her eyes at him. “I thought you went to America to study medicine, not the culinary arts.”

Hannibal smiles as he prepares his own spoonful. “I endeavor to constantly improve myself, on all fronts.”

“Of course,” Mischa responds with a laugh. They continue in comfortable silence until she hums, remembering to pull something out of her skirt pockets. “We got a letter from Robert today.”

She hands over the envelope and uses the opportunity to sup without interruption as Hannibal reads it over - Robert apologizes for not being able to greet him and not knowing when they will be returning. Hardly worth writing a letter, Hannibal thinks, and sets it aside to respond to later.

When he looks up, Mischa’s plate is empty and she is grinning at him. She says nothing, so Hannibal returns his attention to the food. Spoon halfway to his mouth, he looks up again, eyebrows raised - the scar over Mischa’s eye is gone.

He lowers his spoon carefully before inquiring, “You learned a new trick?”

Mischa’s grin grows teeth. “I learned a few.” After a blink, her scar reappears. “These illusions require a lot of energy. Did you make enough to have seconds? I can serve myself.”

At Hannibal’s nod, she does just that. She returns with more soup and bread; stops to pour herself more wine, then for Hannibal, despite the fact that he has hardly taken a sip.

“I thought you took an apprenticeship to learn about herbal medicine, not tricks and illusions.”

Mischa hides a smile behind her wine glass. “I think it’s important to have a well-rounded education, don’t you?”

After dinner, they move into Robert’s study upstairs. The walls are lined with shelves, filled mostly with antique, leather-bound books and the occasional decorative animal skull. Hannibal has settled into the grey chaise lounge while Mischa sits at an oak writing desk, chatting about her day.

Hannibal’s day was long and he is feeling quite tired, but he is enjoying his sister’s conversation and company. She becomes increasingly animated as she talks, reminding Hannibal fondly of their mother, who speaks as much with her hands as she does with her mouth. Mischa is telling him about apprenticing at a local apothecary, where she studies herbal medicine under the tutelage of a Señora Iglesias.

“The Iglesias’s apartment is about the size of ours, but it’s in Montmartre district. It’s only Maestra and her uncle there, so they have converted one of the extra rooms into a greenhouse, which is where we grow herbs for the apothecary.”

“And for personal use?” Mischa winks her uninjured eye at him. “I was in Montmartre today, visiting Alana’s place of business.”

“Your American doctor friend? Where does she practice?”

“It’s a bit unorthodox for a doctor’s office. The place is called Le Cochon Sauvage.”

“The Savage Pig?” Mischa chuckles. “How exciting.”

Hannibal hums in acknowledgement and considers his next words. “I toured there in the morning and sometime after I left, Alana was attacked. I returned to tend to her, but she would not tell me much.” He tilts his head and looks at Mischa. “What would you need in order to see what happened?”

Mischa ponders this as she takes a sip of her wine. “That depends on what you have?”

Hannibal pulls his handkerchief from his pocket and opens it, hands her the cloth which holds several short, black hairs and dark red flakes of dried blood. “I pulled these from Alana’s hand earlier. Apparently she got a good hit in.”

“I think we can do something with this. I’ll bring it to Maestra tomorrow.”

Mischa refolds the handkerchief carefully and sets it aside. Then she walks to a window and pushes it open wide, taking a deep breath of the night air. The breeze is still warm this evening, though soon it will be turning autumn-crisp.

“It’s a full moon tonight, you know.” Mischa turns away from the window to face her brother, silhouetted softly by the moonlight. “All summer, there have been rumors of a loup-garou prowling through the streets of Paris, only on the night of the full moon. They say it keeps to

the shadows but there have been sightings all over the city, if the rumors can be believed. The good people of Paris are in such a fright." Mischa giggles at the thought.

Hannibal indulges her, as he always does. "And have you witnessed this creature yourself?"

"No," Mischa pouts slightly, then grins, eye shining. "But last month I saw one of the bodies."

Mischa grabs a sketchbook from the desk, flipping through the pages to show Hannibal where she has depicted the mangled corpse from multiple angles. She places the book in his hands so he can study the details. "It was...brutal. And terrible." Mischa sounds enchanted.

"I have something else to show you." She drags a chest over from one of the shelves and opens it to reveal a wolf skull laid atop red silk. "One of Robert's hunting trophies. He disapproves of my own interest, so he's never taken me with him."

Mischa runs her fingers across bony ridges, from the brow bone to the tip of a large canine tooth. Then she hefts the skull into her lap and turns it to face Hannibal. He looks at the empty eye sockets, then up to meet her gaze.

"Do you share his disapproval?" Hannibal doesn't need to respond, and she doesn't need to look at him to know his answer. To know that the love of the hunt is something they share.

Mischa grasps the jaw bone, moves it like a macabre ventriloquist puppet, speaks in a mocking tone: "Not. Very. Lady-like." The bones click on the "K" sound and the jaw settles closed. For now.

"You should know, I will be hunting tonight whether or not you accompany me." Mischa pets the length of the skull, again, then smiles prettily at Hannibal. "Though I would appreciate your expertise on the scene."

Slowly, Hannibal returns her smile. "How could I refuse?"

Later that night Mischa leads him to a small chapel, the soon-to-be scene of her first tableau. Like she said, Mischa had planned to create this evening with or without Hannibal's aid, so she ends up doing most of the work while Hannibal observes from his seat at the end of a pew.

Mischa lacks his refinement but he is overall impressed by her effort. She has changed into a loose blouse and pants for better range of movement, hair up in a tight bun and wearing long, black velvet gloves. The location she has chosen is relatively isolated and all the windows are a good two meters up the walls, so no one can peer in while she creates. The building is uninhabited by anyone beside her target, a priest who had been pocketing the alms of his generous patrons.

He did question her desire to copy another killer's work, but she assured him it's a part of her plan. The corpse matches what Mischa had depicted in her sketchbook, with an additional

ferocity. It rests, broken, against the chapel doors, gored in the stomach like in the sketches, plus its limbs are ripped off at the joints and scattered on the floor. It has also been decapitated at the shoulders.

Hannibal considers that head next to him, now nestled in a large, if plainly-decorated, hat box. “Have you ever eaten brains?” he inquires as Mischa steps back to assess her work. The wolf skull she holds in her hands is dripping in viscera. Her good eye sparkles, red-black like the blood that covers her forearms up to her elbows.

“I haven’t had the pleasure, no.” She wipes her hands over the skull, causing bits of flesh to splash quietly on the bloody floor, as she approaches Hannibal. “How would you serve it?”

“Caramelized, on a pommes purée. Garnished with lemon and capers.”

“Sounds delicious.” She arranges the skull in the hat box next to the priest’s head. “Keys, please.”

Hannibal hands over a faded iron keyring; it clinks faintly as she takes it from him.

Within the mess of what used to be a torso, Mischa places the keys, which unlock a closet where the priest has hidden his ill-earned, earthly possessions.

Satisfied by her tableau, Mischa claps her hands together and spins to face her brother, grinning excitedly. “I have one more trick up my sleeve this evening. Please observe.” Hannibal leans back in his seat, crosses his ankles, and does as instructed.

With a showman’s flair, Mischa peels off her long gloves, turns them inside out, and shoves them in her pants pocket. From her other pocket, she produces a switchblade and a small travel cup. She holds the cup between her teeth as she rolls up her right sleeve, exposing her forearm. Hannibal’s brows raise in surprise when she stabs the knife into the soft flesh just below the inside of her elbow, blood rushing up around the blade, then yanks it out sharply, leaving a deep gash.

Her fingers twitch and she pants slightly. Hannibal stands and approaches, slow, more curious than concerned. With her left hand, Mischa takes the cup from her teeth and dips it into the corpse’s stomach cavity, scooping up a small puddle of blood. She leans over the body to catch any spilling as she slurps from the cup.

By the time she finishes drinking, Hannibal is close enough to grasp her wrist and examine her wound. Her blood pulses out in a steady stream; then the flesh miraculously begins to seal itself shut. He uses a cerulean handkerchief to clear away the red, which blooms into a deep violet as the fabric absorbs her blood. When he pulls back, her arm is unscarred - no trace of the cut remains.

She slides her hand into his and squeezes. “What do you think?” Mischa’s smile is close-lipped, suddenly self-conscious.

Hannibal lifts her hand to kiss the back of it, the skin of his lips sticking briefly to her drying blood. “Magnificent, mylimasis.”

She blushes but holds his gaze, licks the remaining blood from her lips and grins, teeth pink. She links their hands together, her fingers fitting in between his six digits like they used to do when they were children. “Let’s go home.”

Hannibal begins his day by perusing the local morning market. A variety of booths line the cobbled road that runs parallel to the river Seine. He remembers this area as being more bustling when he was an adolescent - loud voices overlapping as vendors hawk their wares and barter with customers - but he understands why the mood is somber today.

Clusters of whispering gossipers either part or pull more tightly together as Hannibal makes his way down the street, marking items off his shopping list: Spinach, tomatoes, and onion from a grocer who swears he saw the beast, at least two meters tall and covered in tawny fur. A dozen eggs from a farmer who boasts that he chased a sheep-hungry wolf off his property with just his walking stick and a cowbell. A quarter wheel of gouda from a woman who claims her straw-woven dolls are a proven demon deterrent, just ask Frère Arthur down the block at St. Matthew’s.

He spends the rest of the morning cooking and walks to Quartier Pigalle in the early afternoon, carrying a basket filled with lunch on his arm. Hannibal observes that the neighborhood has much higher energy than the market, and wonders how news of the corpse affects business around here. He imagines that such a public reminder of human mortality would send people running to either a church or a brothel, so these streets will be busier than usual tonight.

He spots Margot almost immediately upon arriving at Le Cochon Sauvage. He goes to greet her, but is beaten by an East Asian woman whom he had seen briefly the day before, sporting a faded blue tunic with brown pants and suspenders.

“Margot, is Will around?” Hannibal overhears and decides there’s no harm in waiting.

“Oui, he is with his mademoiselles.”

“How many today?”

“Four, I believe.”

“Less than usual.”

“True, though he said Roxy needs some special attention this afternoon. He may need a hand, actually, you know how energetic she can be.” The women share a laugh. Hannibal realizes he doesn’t know what kind of work Will does - his mind is racing with possibilities.

He clears his throat and greets them before he can be caught eavesdropping. He shakes hands with the woman in blue, who introduces herself as Beverly, then addresses Margot. “I came to check in on Alana. How is she?”

“Better than yesterday, but she still seems weak so I told her to stay home and rest today.”

“We’ll have dinner when she’s feeling better.” Hannibal gestures to his basket. “I brought something to share. I was also hoping to thank Will for his help yesterday.”

“A great idea. He probably hasn't eaten.” Margot sounds resigned, like this is a common occurrence. A frown pulls at her lips, rouged in nearly the same rich crimson as her blouse.

“He rejected the croissant I offered this morning, but to be fair, I had already eaten most of it,” Beverly smiles. “I was just about to go find him, make him take a break and fill him in on the hot lunchtime gossip. Want to come?”

“I wouldn’t want to interrupt,” Hannibal replies politely, effectively masking his desperate curiosity.

“You said you’re a doctor? I’m sure he’ll appreciate your assistance. The girls can be a real handful.” Beverly grins despite putting on a grave tone. “Sometimes there are injuries.”

Hannibal is not sure how to respond to that, so he just nods and follows Beverly while Margot takes his basket and tells them to meet her in the kitchen when they’re ready.

Beverly leads him down a hallway and Hannibal is not expecting it when they step outside into a bright alley. Once his eyes have a moment to adjust, he sees Will, who is wearing much the same as he was yesterday and sitting on the dusty ground with a small, wiggling terrier in his lap.

There is a basin half full of soapy water next to Will and several mismatched bowls with food and water against the wall, which several other dogs have mostly abandoned in order to beg for pets from Beverly, standing on hind legs and pawing at her while she coos at them.

“Bev,” Will chastises, “they know they shouldn’t jump on people, so don’t reward them for - ow, Roxy, I am trying to help you!” Will yanks his hand away from the dog in his lap and shakes it out, scowling, before noticing Hannibal. Will’s eyes flicker up over his face, irritated, but not because of him.

Hannibal suppresses a smile as Roxy uses the momentary lapse in attention to escape Will’s clutches, trotting unevenly toward Hannibal and barking, high-pitched and happy. The other dogs join in until Will makes a hissing sound - some sort of command - and they all quiet.

“He’s got all the dogs in the neighborhood trained,” Beverly comments while Hannibal bends down to pet Roxy, keeping her at arm's length so as not to get her blonde fur on his trousers.

“With one notable exception,” Will grumbles. “There’s a cut on her leg so I gave her a bath and have been trying to wrap it, but she is refusing to cooperate.” Will sighs, exasperated.

“I believe I can be of assistance,” Hannibal says. Roxy follows as he walks over to Will and takes the bandage from his hand. When she’s in range, Will snatches Roxy back up and together they manage to get her leg wrapped quickly and properly.

“Good work, team,” Beverly congratulates them.

“Bev, you didn’t do anything remotely helpful,” Will scoffs, getting to his feet and ineffectually wiping the dust off his pants. Beverly bows and tips an imaginary hat in acknowledgement.

“You can help by eating the lunch I prepared,” Hannibal suggests, adding to Will, “I was hoping to thank you for yesterday.”

“You don’t have to-”

“Will,” Beverly interrupts, “when is the last time you ate?”

A tightening in the sharp line of Will’s jaw. “I’m not sure,” Will admits, then, “Didn’t you just get back from lunch?”

“It would be rude to refuse, Willoughby. Keep up.”

Beverly leads them back inside to a small room attached to the main kitchen, where Margot is waiting, having just finished making coffee and setting a round table. There is only one kitchen sink, so Will indicates to Hannibal that he can go first.

As Hannibal unpacks lunch for them, he observes Beverly chatting with Will while he scrubs his hands at the sink, just out of earshot. Will is scowling again when he sits down to eat, glowering out the window.

“Quiche with sausage, spinach, and gouda,” Hannibal narrates as he dishes out slices. Hannibal allows time for everyone to start eating and get compliments out of the way before he looks to Margot and Will. “What details did Alana give you about what happened yesterday?”

“Just that she was attacked while walking.” Will stabs at his plate with more force than necessary.

“She won’t say much else on the subject,” Margot adds. “It’s difficult to narrow down the list of would-be fathers and general misogynists who would like to see Alana hurt for the work she does.”

Hannibal nods. “When I treated her yesterday, I found some hair in crusted blood on her palm. I believe she scratched her assailant’s cheek.”

“I’ll leave him with more than a scratch,” Margot promises darkly.

“It was probably more than one guy,” Beverly says. “Someone at market today said his grand-mère witnessed a scuffle outside their place, on Rue Coustou. Said she didn’t see much but there were three men, and one of them was dressed up with a fancy cane. Z’s over there talking with her now.” She squints out the window. “Actually, Z’s back.”

Margot and Beverly are out of their seats in a second, heading for the door. Will makes to join them but sits back down when Margot shoots him a look. “Please excuse us,” she smiles

quickly at Hannibal, just a twitch of her lips, and leaves.

He and Will are alone now. Hannibal admires the man before him, who is frowning at his plate. Light from the window softly illuminates his dark brown, haphazard curls and his skin, the color of star anise with a rose undertone. The bags under his eyes are darker than yesterday, bringing out the bright blue of his irises.

Eventually, Hannibal speaks. “Will, if I may-”

“I’m fine.” Will dismisses his concern automatically. His voice is firm but has less of a bite now, no doubt tempered by the food.

Hannibal adjusts his utensils unnecessarily to give him a moment, then tries again. “You strike me as someone who is accustomed to reassuring others of your wellbeing. If you will excuse my forwardness, I want you to know that you needn’t put up that pretense with me.”

Hannibal eats more quiche as Will deliberates internally. His face is very expressive and Hannibal enjoys reading it.

Will pushes his plate aside and leans in, elbows on the table. “Did you see the body at the chapel?”

Hannibal avoids answering directly. “I haven’t heard many details, just that there was a corpse found.”

“I saw the crowd this morning. They were saying it was...eviscerated.”

Hannibal tilts his head, considering. “The violence isn’t all that bothers you,” he observes.

Will looks irritated by his, presumably correct, assessment. “I,” Will pauses and shifts in his chair slightly, uncomfortable. “I didn’t get near the body, but I can see it. When I close my eyes.” Will does just that, and when he opens them, he looks straight into Hannibal’s, gaze both challenging and vulnerable.

Hannibal aims for a neutral, yet inviting, expression. “Does it have the quality of a dream or a hallucination?”

“I’m no stranger to nightmares.” Will drops his eyes and leans back in his chair.

“That you are not.” Margot speaks from the doorway. She rejoins them at the table, looking tired. “Apparently the cane was topped by a silver bird’s head, but that’s all Z got. I’m going home for a bit to see how Alana’s fairing. Merci beaucoup, Hannibal, it was delicious.”

She turns to Will. “I’m sending you home early as well. Take your medicine and try to get some rest.” Will nods, wiping his hands over his face in exhaustion.

Together it only takes them a few minutes to clear the table. Will parts from his company with a soft “Bonsoir, Hannibal.” Hannibal watches him walk away for a moment, before heading back to his own apartment.

Mischa is in a particularly good mood that night, and her high spirits carry over into the next day. Around noon, Hannibal goes with Mischa to the apothecary where she apprentices, Générosité des Anges, to meet her mentor.

They are greeted by a woman with warm, brown skin like ground cloves and straight black hair, braided and up in a bun. Her eyes are like flint, dark and piercing.

“Maestra, let me introduce my brother, Hannibal.” Hannibal kisses her hand in greeting.

“Momoztli Iglesias. Pleasure to make your acquaintance.” Polite, but almost overly formal.

“Momos-tlee?” He pronounces it back at her. “A beautiful name.”

“My mother was Nahua,” she elaborates sparingly, like someone who is not in the habit of sharing private details about herself nor appreciating superficial compliments from strangers.

Mischa had spoken very highly of her mentor, and with great affection, so Hannibal was not expecting her to be so reserved. His first impression of Sra. Iglesias is that she is stern, dressed in no-nonsense black skirts and a plain white blouse, but considerate - qualities that would benefit Mischa’s tutelage, as he knows his sister can often be overly excitable.

Sra. Iglesias is offering Hannibal a tour when they hear the tinkling of a bell as the front door opens and a customer steps inside, none other than Will Graham. Will notices Hannibal and pauses, not expecting him, before “Bonjour. Is Señora Iglesias in?”

Hannibal steps aside as she greets him. “Does Dr. Bloom need more supplies?”

“Oh, no - well, I’m not sure. I came to thank you for the letter you sent, with the sleeping aid.” Will digs around in his pocket to pull out an empty vial.

Hannibal observes Sra. hesitate a beat too long - she wasn’t the one who sent it. Mischa’s up to mischief then.

“I took it last night and it worked wonderfully,” Will continues, “I feel much better than I have in weeks. May I request a refill?”

“Of course you may,” she responds, recovering quickly. Hannibal is not sure if Will noticed. “Mademoiselle Lecter, you will assist me.”

“Sí, Maestra,” she responds, unapologetic. She gives Hannibal a wink and follows Sra. Iglesias through the door next to a vibrant mural of Guadalupe, the Virgin Mary, that leads to the back room where they mix the herbs. Hannibal joins them but Will remains in the storefront.

Hannibal can see him from the work room and finds himself paying more attention to Will than his sister’s work. Will has a look of enchantment on his face. The bags under his eyes have lessened significantly but not faded entirely. His lips are parted slightly and he unconsciously leans in even as he stands less than a meter in front of the mural.

Will’s fingertip traces a line over Guadalupe’s left eye, the same line as Mischa’s scar.

Hannibal’s attention is drawn sharply to the smell of blood. A drop of crimson trickles from Mischa’s left eye and she wipes it away, looking at the smudge on her hand in surprise. Unusual but likely not life-threatening, he assesses quickly.

Hannibal hears a small, frightened noise and turns back to Will, now staring at the mural in terror, quaking, hands brought up to cover his mouth.

Hannibal approaches Will with the intent to comfort. Hannibal tries calling his name, voice soothing, but Will is becoming increasingly tense with every moment that passes. Hannibal wraps gentle but firm hands around Will’s upper arms and Will lashes out, claws tearing.

Hannibal doesn’t react to the blood pooling on his shoulder except to tighten his grip on Will’s arms. Will doesn’t seem fully conscious of his actions as he tries to fight him off, driven solely by fear response.

Then Will makes a sound like the air has been punched out of him and suddenly goes lax, collapsing into Hannibal’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

momoztli is nahua, a word which describes the indigenous peoples who speak nahuatl, which was the most common language spoken by the aztecs. nahua and aztec aren't interchangeable terms, but momoztli is both.
about the tableau in the start of the chapter - I don't think we see it but the show claims one of the chesapeake ripper’s kills was a man left in a church pew with his tongue used as a page marker in the bible he was holding. I thought that was appropriately sacrilegious for my story, plus cryptic communication via bible verses is always fun.
also, hannibal’s looks are a combo of mads and book-hannibal. the extra finger on his left hand is book-canon, because of course hannibal has “the rarest form of polydactyly” - I mean, why not?
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